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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000394

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W,
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10 YEARS
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: NAPTIP SEES RISE IN INTERNATIONAL
TRAFFICKING, CLOSES LAGOS BROTHELS

Classified By: CONSUL GENERAL DONNA BLAIR FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (SBU) Summary: In a September 17 meeting, an official from the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP) told PolOff the current increase in international trafficking parallels an increase in sophistication of the traffickers; insufficient funding hampers an adequate NAPTIP response. On July 8, the Lagos branch of NAPTIP closed two brothels in the Lagos area. Lengthy court processes, typical of NAPTIP's uphill legal battle and the Nigerian court system, continue. End summary.

More International Trafficking, Desperation Seen

12. (C) Godwin Morka, head of the Lagos NAPTIP office, told PolOff September 17 that his office has noticed a shift in the trafficking patterns and techniques over the past year. Traffickers are increasing their use of forged documents such as passports, entry and exit stamps, identification documents and papers used to trick victims into believing they will be engaged in legitimate employment. Morka also reported that victims seem increasingly desperate for employment. "Times seem to be getting worse rather than better," he said. Finally, Morka reported that more victims are traveling to international destinations compared with last year. Morka, with the Ondo State Ministry of Women's Affairs, was conducting outreach in Ore and surrounding towns through traditional councils, women's groups, and others, to raise awareness of trafficking in their area. Ore lies on the road between Benin City in Edo State, a key source for victims, and Lagos, one of the main transit and destination points.

13. (C) Morka said NAPTIP is overwhelmed with work and remains inadequately funded. He claimed the entire NAPTIP budget is smaller than the catering budget for the Presidential Villa. NAPTIP officials continue to face significant challenges, and Morka complained that police and immigration officers are not aware of, or concerned about, their own role in preventing and identifying trafficking. To add to its problems, in July the Lagos NAPTIP office received reports of people impersonating NAPTIP officers and demanding protection money from brothels. Morka emphatically stated his officers are not corrupt.

Brothel Closure Required Coordination, Time

¶4. (C) Morka said that closing two local brothels took an great deal of effort. The court cases dragged on because of the slow Nigerian legal system and the efforts of well-funded defense teams representing the brothel owners. As the lead agency, it fell to NAPTIP to push the legal case through, coordinate the police, the workers, the courts, and the media, and to plan raids and closures with relevant agencies.

In previous cases, Morka said police tipped off suspects to an impending investigation when they were included in the planning stages, but the brothel closures were not impacted. It took NAPTIP three years of court battles before the court ordered one of the brothels, the Aimasiko Hotel, closed. A case over the Crown Hotel begun in 2006 is still pending, though the brothel itself was also closed in July.

¶5. (SBU) Morka told PolOff that the residents around the brothels were grateful for the closures, thanking one of the NAPTIP officers for finally taking action. (Note: Raids in the past have not been received as warmly in other neighborhoods, where residents fear both law enforcement officials and the traffickers themselves. End note.)

NAPTIP Success Story: Aimasiko Hotel

¶5. (SBU) In May 2005, 27 teenage girls were rescued by NAPTIP from Aimasiko Hotel in Ogba, following a tip by a member of the public. The girls, aged between ten and seventeen, had been recruited by aging prostitutes from villages in Eket and Oron areas of Akwa Ibom State, ostensibly to work in supermarkets or as nannies, in Lagos, but in reality to work

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as prostitutes. Upon arrival in Ogba, the girls were locked in the hotel and beaten by the older prostitutes and brothel owners when they resisted. Twenty were recruited while home on school holiday; one had nearly completed secondary school.

The remaining seven had been forced to quit school because their parents were too poor to afford school fees. (Note: Headmasters of even free public schools often demand a bribe from parents to enroll their children. End note.) The girls had spent between four and thirteen months as prostitutes, earning an average of 60,000 naira a day (USD 513.00) for their bosses while keeping only 300 naira (USD 2.56) for themselves.

NAPTIP Success Story: Crown Hotel

¶6. (SBU) December 31 2006, a fifteen-year-old girl escaped from the Crown Hotel in Lagos and begged a passerby for help; the citizen contacted NAPTIP. Twelve girls between twelve and seventeen years of age were rescued from the hotel. Two were pregnant, and six tested positive for HIV. On July 17, 2007, the Federal High Court ordered the hotel seized and closed. The owner, manager, and three madams were arrested, charged, and released; the court cases are still pending.

¶7. (C) Comment: NAPTIP is overwhelmed with work and severely under-funded. Its staff soldiers on despite the odds. Brothel closures have been especially important in gaining for NAPTIP more prominent national recognition of their mandate and their effectiveness. But without a budget increase, few traffickers will be caught, prosecuted and imprisoned, and few victims will be rescued. End Comment.

¶8. (U) This cable has been cleared by Embassy Abuja.
BLAIR